DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 359 130 SO 023 147

AUTHOR Risinger, C. Frederick
TITLE Current Directions in Social Studies.
INSTITUTION Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, MA.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 22p.
AVAILABLE FROM Houghton Mifflin Publishing Co., 222 Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02116.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Controversial Issues (Course Content); Cultural Pluralism; *Curriculum Development; Educational Change; *Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; Ethical Instruction; Geography Instruction; History Instruction; Literature; Religion Studies; *Social Studies; Teaching Methods; Western Civilization; Writing Instruction

ABSTRACT

The social studies curriculum recently has been subjected to many changes. New curriculum patterns coupled with more effective instructional strategies have altered significantly subject content and teaching methods. Drawing from contemporary research literature, newly developed curriculum guides, and blue-ribbon reports from content specialists and social studies teachers, this booklet reviews 10 contemporary trends in social studies and suggests how instruction can change to meet the needs of a changing country. The 10 trends reviewed concern the following topics: history, geography, literature, multicultural society, western ideals, ethics and values, role of religion, controversial issues, in-depth coverage, and writing. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED359130

CURRENT DIRECTIONS in Social Studies

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

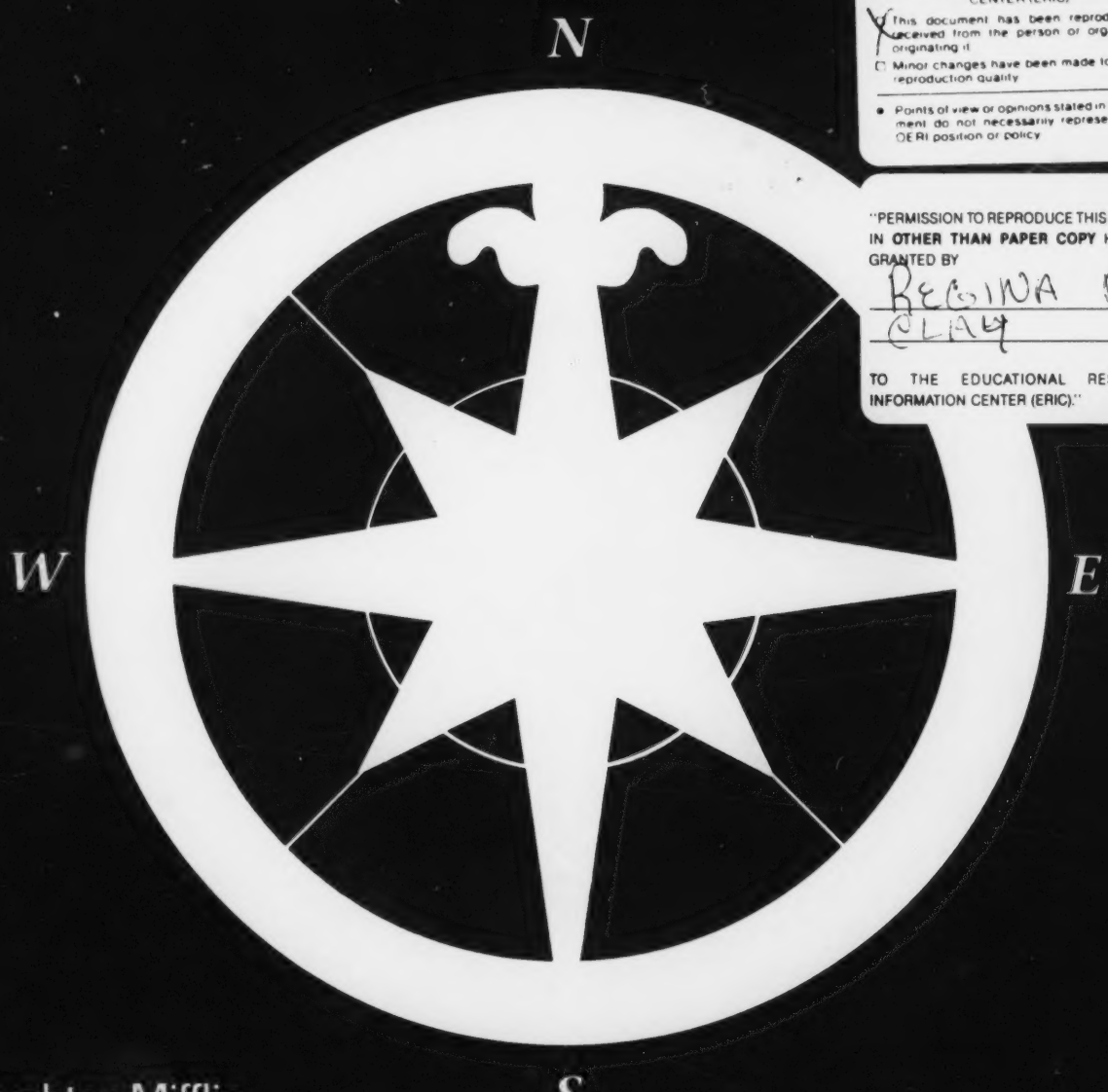
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN **OTHER THAN PAPER COPY** HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

REGINA R CLAY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."



SO 023 147

Houghton Mifflin

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Current Directions *in Social Studies*

Contents

History 2
Geography 4
Literature 6
Multicultural Society 8
Western Ideals 9
Ethics and Values 10
Role of Religion 11
Controversial Issues 13
In-Depth Coverage 14
Writing 16

C. Frederick Risinger
Social Studies Development Center
Indiana University, Bloomington

C. Frederick Risinger taught U.S. history, world history, and government for 14 years in suburban Chicago. Since 1973 he has been the Associate Director of the Social Studies Development Center at Indiana University. A writer, lecturer, and consultant on trends in social studies, Risinger is the past President of the National Council for the Social Studies. Currently, he serves on the coordinating committee for the New National History Standards, part of the America 2000 program.

This is an era of dramatic change in many aspects of American society—politics, economics, social structure, and education. In the field of education, change has been fostered by numerous factors, including rapid demographic shifts throughout the United States, new research into the nature of teaching and learning, and dissatisfaction with students' achievements on national tests and in relation to their peers in other parts of our increasingly interdependent world. While these forces affect all subject areas, their influence has been most pronounced in the social studies curriculum. The social studies have always taken education for democratic citizenship as their central aim. As each generation faces new challenges, social studies continue to be the primary vehicle for providing America's youth with a sense of civic responsibility, along with the knowledge and skills needed to participate effectively in our changing democratic society.

New curriculum patterns coupled with more effective instructional strategies have significantly altered subject content and teaching methods. Drawing from contemporary research literature, newly developed curriculum guides, and blue-ribbon reports from content specialists and social studies teachers, this booklet reviews ten contemporary trends in social studies and suggests how instruction can change to meet the needs of a changing America.

More History and Different History

The study of the human past, with all its triumphs and tragedies, is necessary to the understanding of contemporary society and the issues facing humankind.

This is by far the most significant trend in the field. Every major curriculum report issued in the past five years has called for greater emphasis on history throughout the K–12 curriculum. Encouraged by historians and social studies educators, this renewed emphasis on history seems to have struck a chord with the American public. To some, history is the single discipline capable of uniting the various fields within social studies—anthropology, economics, geography, political science, and the behavioral sciences. Others point out that the humanities, including the arts, music, literature, philosophy, and religion, can be taught through historical study. The study of the human past, with all its triumphs and tragedies, is necessary to the understanding of contemporary society and the issues facing humankind.

While there is more emphasis on history in both elementary and secondary schools, it is a different kind of history from that which has dominated the social studies curriculum for decades. In the past, history meant primarily political, military, and diplomatic history. Who won what election? Who won and lost what wars? Who signed what treaty? Moreover, most world history was the history of what is now called "western civilization." That history began with a brief review of prehistory and then moved to the cradles of civilization in the river valleys of the Middle East and Asia. Then, the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome were followed by gradual European ascendancy and colonization of the rest of the world. It was history viewed through the narrow lens of Europe, with no place for the achievements of peoples of Africa south of the Sahara, the Arab states, south or east Asia, or the Americas.

Today's history is very different. First, it is a complete history combining political and military history with the story of all types of human endeavor. Art and music, agriculture and manufacturing, entertainment and sports, religion, education, and philosophy—all aspects of human society are included in history. This new history can accurately be termed social history. Certainly, the great political, military, and cultural events of the past that have shaped the present must continue to form the core of history. But true

understanding of the past depends on knowing about how people lived their daily lives.

Second, students are learning about *all* peoples of this world. They are better able to understand the complexities of contemporary events when they have knowledge of the historical experiences of the peoples of Africa, the Americas, and Asia, as well as the peoples of Europe. While students continue to study the great historical figures whose actions helped determine the course of humankind, they are also learning about the average men and women who fueled social movements through grassroots contributions and who marched through history as active participants. What was it like to be a slave on a ship bound for America? How did rural and urban people cope with the problems of the Great Depression? What was daily life like for a young girl on a wagon train moving across the Great Plains? What courage did it take to strike during the early days of labor unions or to march for a woman's right to vote in the early 1900s?

Finally, students must do more than acquire facts. To gain genuine understanding, today's students must learn about broad significant themes that have been pervasive throughout human history. They need to be taught how to analyze cause and effect, distinguish between fact and opinion, and understand that mere chance can affect human affairs.

Students must do more than acquire facts.

More Geography and Different Geography

Geography is the stage upon which the human drama is played.

Along with history, geography has emerged as a primary foundation of the social studies curriculum. Geography is the stage upon which the human drama is played. Knowledge of geography and the interaction between humans and the natural environment leads to a more comprehensive understanding of history. Understanding geography helps develop perspective on the changing demography of the United States, provides a better understanding of world cultures, and helps students understand some of the major reasons for human behavior throughout history.

And just as there is a new history, there is a new geography. If the new history can be referred to as social history, the new geography can be termed human geography. In the past, geography in the schools meant memorizing state and national capitals and learning where copper was mined and coffee grown. While some of these facts are necessary, today's geography places greater emphasis on critical thinking and problem analysis.

In recent years, geographers have put forward five fundamental themes that serve as a framework for geographical understanding and illustrate the fundamental relationship between human history and the earth—between time and place. These themes are (1) developing a sense of place, (2) developing locational skills and understanding the significance of location, (3) understanding the interaction between humans and the natural environment throughout history, (4) understanding the importance of human movement and migration, and (5) understanding world regions and the twin impact of cultural differences and increasing global interdependence.

Geography based on these themes is not limited to memorizing facts or learning simple location skills based on lines of longitude and latitude. These themes help students understand why humans develop regional characteristics that distinguish the way they live and act. These same themes help students examine the role geography plays in our history and our future.

Consider the following analysis by a fifth grade who studied the effects of geography on their small midwestern river town: The students learned that during the mid-1800s the town's commercial life centered on the riverfront. That is where the banks,

major businesses, and wealthy homes were located. By the late 1800s and early 1900s, the focus had moved away from the river to the railroad line that came through town. The big buildings near the river were turned into warehouses and the fancy homes became apartment buildings. New businesses and modern homes were built near the railroad station. By 1980 the new interstate highway had been built about two miles east of town. The new mall near the interchange and the subdivisions of new homes caused a dramatic decline in the business and housing areas near the now-closed railroad station. Windows in businesses and homes were boarded up. Through this kind of analysis students learn how some people became wealthy while others lost jobs—all because of how humans moved themselves and goods over the land. Students in this fifth-grade class have learned geography in the truest sense of the term.

This approach to geography provides an ample framework for student inquiry into the role that geography plays in human history. It also helps students realize a critical understanding of the world around them, both now and in the past. Such knowledge is fundamental to sound social studies instruction and will lead to informed judgement and better citizenship not only in matters of resources and the environment but in life overall.

Geography is not limited to learning simple location skills.

Using Literature to Enrich Social Studies Themes

Infusing literature into social studies provides students with the opportunity to share the experiences of people in other times and places.

While this trend is particularly evident in elementary classrooms, it has implications and promise for teachers and students in secondary schools as well. Recent educational research indicates that students can acquire many of the stated goals of the social studies curriculum by reading carefully selected literature as part of a comprehensive social studies program. In elementary schools teachers can combine reading instruction and social studies, thereby enhancing both subjects. Students at this age enjoy stories, particularly those about other children. But the use of literature in the social studies curriculum is not limited to fiction or biography. Poetry, myths and legends, plays, and even religious literature—when properly used—enrich instruction and make historical periods come to life. Infusing literature into social studies also provides students with the opportunity to share the experiences of people in other times and places.

Sometimes literature provides an engaging point of entry for students into a new topic or period. Other times it expands on or exemplifies ideas or events that students have studied in a previous lesson. In either case, the use of literature should be response centered. The goal is have students respond to literature in ways that help them enrich their understanding of other times and places, promote the development of their historical empathy, broaden their perspective on historical events, and deepen their appreciation of the ways in which events and ideas affect people's daily lives. For example, excerpts from *Sarah Plain and Tall* can give elementary students an accurate and dramatic picture of life on the midwestern prairie during the mid-1800s. And, by reading Riki Levinson's *Watch The Stars Come Out* even the youngest students gain personal insights into the challenges families face when they immigrate to the United States.

In the middle grades, creative teachers have been using fiction and other literature in history and other social studies courses for years. Frequently, language arts and social studies teachers cooperate in developing units where students read fiction or biography in English class at the same time students are studying a particular historical period. A typical example is combining the study of the the westward expansion of the United States with reading Willa Cather's

My Antonia, or reading *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights* while studying the rise of the Islamic Empire.

Integrating literature is one of the best ways to highlight the multicultural nature of American society and to help students understand the culture and society of other nations. Fictional works, biographies, and autobiographies of immigrants to this nation are bringing stories of courage, prejudice, hard work, and success into the classroom. Poetry, fiction, and other literature from around the world allows students to see the people of other cultures as they see themselves.

Integrating literature is one of the best ways to highlight the multicultural nature of American society.

In addition to using literature as a powerful tool for teaching social studies, the use of original documents and primary sources brings an added sense of reality to the classroom. These sources include diary entries, letters, speeches and proclamations, and even business and financial records. Such eyewitness accounts go beneath the mere outline of past events to give students a sense of what is was like to actually live in those times. Properly selected primary sources can be used at all grade levels. In the elementary grades appropriate excerpts from diaries, documents, and speeches make history come alive. Secondary students benefit from longer excerpts or even complete documents.

Research and observations of classroom teachers clearly show that student interest is heightened when literature and primary sources are used as an integral part of a social studies program. It should be encouraged wherever possible.

Focus on the Multicultural Nature of American Society

The effective social studies curriculum highlights and celebrates the diversity of our multicultural society.

The United States is truly a nation of nations. In sheer numbers, there are more immigrants coming to America today in larger numbers and from more countries than during the great immigration period of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Today's new Americans are arriving from Cambodia, Haiti, Nigeria, Mexico, Egypt, Pakistan, China, Ireland, and Honduras—to name a few.

All Americans, both new and old, have earned a place in the history of the United States. Recently greater effort has been made to integrate more voices in the telling of our history. We are beginning to see that our history is the story of many people—defined by race, ethnicity, social status, gender, religion, and region.

The effective social studies curriculum highlights and celebrates the diversity of our multicultural society. Young Americans learn about and appreciate the experiences and contributions of men and women from all ethnic and socio-economic groups. Students also learn about the nations and societies that were the former homes of our ancestors. This helps students develop a more realistic view of the United States and the world.

A true multicultural perspective presents an accurate picture of all of the many different groups that comprise our pluralistic society. Students should be learning about the beliefs and goals that bind us together. Our national motto, *e pluribus unum* — from many, one—forms the basis of a realistic and beneficial multicultural education.

NOTE *Many of the trends mentioned in this booklet are an integral part of a multicultural education. For example, emphasizing a more extensive social history (page 2), teaching about religion (page 11), and studying issues in depth (page 15) work hand in hand to endorse a well-rounded, pluralistic vision of our nation and the world. As an underlying theme of these trends, a multicultural approach promotes a genuine understanding of our heritage of diversity and the ties that unite us as Americans.*

Renewed Attention to Western Ideals in American Society

This trend is a companion, not a competitor, to the focus on a multicultural nation. Balancing these two is probably the most difficult task facing social studies curriculum developers and classroom teachers today. While it is absolutely essential that students learn about the contributions and experiences of all Americans, they should also learn about the origins of many of the beliefs and principles that have made the United States unique among the world's nations. Without neglecting the important ideas and technological advances of peoples in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas, students are learning about the growth of political and economic freedom that has its roots primarily in western Europe. The evolution of the contract theory of government, of limited power for rulers, and separation of governmental powers can be traced directly from Europe during the late medieval period and the Enlightenment to the present-day United States government. Moreover, the model of a democratic parliamentary or presidential government appears to be the dominant system throughout the contemporary world. Acknowledging the political thinkers and leaders of Europe for having developed the underlying principles of our political system is just as important as, for example, giving credit to the Chinese for inventing paper, or to the Arabs for developing the use of the zero in arithmetic.

As the world becomes even more interdependent, the news social studies curriculum will blend a multicultural approach with appropriate attention to our western heritage. One widely known curriculum report, *Charting a Course: Social Studies for the 21st Century*, recommends a three-year secondary course that will combine United States and world history in a seamless pattern. While this goal may be difficult to achieve at this time, it appears to be an idea whose time will come.

As the world becomes even more interdependent, the new social studies curriculum will combine a multicultural approach with appropriate attention to our western heritage.

Renewed Attention to Ethics and Values

In today's social studies programs, students are encouraged to examine the role of the individual in society and the responsibilities and behaviors that lead to a just and fair nation and world.

Until the late 1950s and 1960s, many civic and other social studies textbooks had chapters where specific values such as honesty or punctuality were emphasized. In the post-Sputnik era, however, social studies courses were supposed to be "value free." Young people were asked to identify and clarify their own beliefs and values, but no attempt was made to guide them toward a predetermined set of values. In today's social studies programs, students are encouraged to examine the role of the individual in society and the responsibilities and behaviors that lead to a just and fair nation and world. Frequently referred to as "civic virtue," these qualities include a sense of fair play, a respect for minority rights, a tolerance of other beliefs, and a desire to participate in the functioning of a democratic society.

The content of history and social studies provides a set of principles that are accepted and supported by nearly all Americans. These principles are found primarily in the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Value issues are best studied through historical analysis. Discussing topics such as the internment of Americans of Japanese ancestry during World War II or the treatment of slaves before the Civil War helps students identify the core values underlying American society and how these values have been ignored or violated in the past. Young Americans in social studies classes are learning how the contracts that ensure the freedoms associated with a democratic society are fragile and must be renewed by each generation.

It is precisely these core values that unite this multicultural and pluralistic nation. Effective social studies programs integrate this important element at all grade levels. At the primary grades, learning to share or take turns provides the basis for understanding the intrinsic worth of each individual as well as the individual's responsibility to fellow citizens. In the upper grades, students discuss the importance of active, thoughtful participation in public affairs. The inherent interaction of rights and responsibilities is an essential aspect of education for citizenship, the primary purpose of social studies.

The Role of Religion in the Study of History

Like ethics and values, the role of religion and the importance of religious beliefs in human affairs have been ignored in the public schools for decades. There has been much controversy and confusion concerning the teaching about religion in public schools. Many educators incorrectly assumed that the Supreme Court decisions of the 1960s banning school prayer meant that all instruction about religion was illegal. This is not the case. The United States Supreme Court has interpreted the First Amendment to mean that public schools may neither promote nor inhibit religious belief or non-belief. Therefore, trying to teach the tenets of a specific religion or religious group was and is forbidden, but teaching **about** religion and its impact on history is not. The approach to religion in the classroom should be academic, not devotional.

Many major historical events or issues are impossible to understand without understanding the role of religion in human history.

Historians and anthropologists tell us that religion is a "cultural universal"—that some pattern of religious beliefs and practices has been part of every society throughout world history. Ignoring or avoiding the religious and philosophical roots of developments in history can give students the false impression that the religious and ethical traditions of humankind are insignificant and unimportant. Many major historical events or issues such as the Crusades, the Enlightenment, the early settlement of both the Spanish- and English-speaking colonies in the Western Hemisphere, the half-century of struggle and conflict between India and Pakistan, and the complexities of political and social life in the Middle East, are impossible to understand without understanding the role of religion in human history.

In today's social studies classrooms, students learn about the origins and early growth of the Muslim faith and its close relationship to both Judaism and Christianity. They examine the persecution of the Pilgrims that forced them to leave England and seek a place where they could practice their faith. They also learn about the intolerant attitudes that some of the early colonists had toward those with other beliefs. In world history a comparative study of the world's major religions gives students a more complete and accurate picture of the world and helps explain many contemporary domestic and international issues. Studying similarities among the beliefs of

A comparative study of the world's major religions gives students a more complete and accurate picture of the world.

several different religions gives students a sense that the people of the world are more alike than different. The knowledge that nearly all world religions have a belief similar to the Golden Rule of Christian religions is not only illuminating, but helps students see that a concern for ethics and human rights has existed throughout history, in all parts of the world.

Teaching about the impact of religion in history and contemporary society is closely linked to multicultural and ethics education. The United States has shifted from the dominant Protestant ethic of the eighteenth century to a pluralism that now includes people of all faiths, as well as a number a number of people who indicate no religious preference. Knowing about, comparing, and understanding religious beliefs is a key element in developing tolerance and, more important, a comprehension of one of the primary motivating factors in human affairs.

Resources For Teaching About Religion

Study about religion requires informed teachers using good materials. The following educational organizations offer programs and resources for helping teachers to teach about religion in public schools:

National Council on Religion and Public Education
N162 Lagomarcino Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011.

First Liberty Institute at George Mason University
Robinson Hall, #3307, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030.

World Religions Curriculum Development Center
St. Louis Park Public Schools, Minneapolis, MN 55426.

Americans United Research Foundation
900 Silver Spring Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910

Copies of *Moral and Civic Education and Teaching About Religion* are available from the Bureau of Publications Sales, California State Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802.

Attention to Contemporary and Controversial Issues

Like the controversial topic of religion, many social studies educators and textbook publishers have ignored or downplayed controversial topics. Such an approach is not only a barrier to developing important critical-thinking skills, it also eliminates much of the drama and excitement of studying history and the contemporary human condition. Students who are able to read about and discuss the various aspects of historical or current controversies are much more likely to understand the complexities of human events, apply analytical thinking to other past or contemporary issues, and, perhaps most important, enjoy social studies.

One of the best ways to examine controversial issues in the early grades is to ask students to look at events through the eyes of individuals or groups that were involved.

One of the best ways to examine controversial issues in the early grades is to ask students to look at events through the eyes of all individuals or groups that were involved. For example, trying to see the arrival of Columbus or the coming of Spanish and English settlers through the eyes of the indigenous peoples of the Americas is a strategy that can be used throughout the elementary grades. Examining the paradoxical political system of the early Athenians, with their belief in direct democracy for male citizens, coupled with slavery and the lack of any political role for women, can help students understand that the struggle for freedom and political liberty has been continuous throughout history. Comparing the relative tolerance and intolerance of religious groups in colonial Massachusetts and Rhode Island combines the two trends of giving religion its appropriate role in history and examining controversial issues. Bringing that topic up to date with a discussion of religious tolerance in modern America is an excellent way to heighten student interest and bring multiculturalism into the classroom in a natural, yet effective manner.

One of the best ways to explore a current or historical controversy is by using primary documents. Newspaper accounts, speeches, diaries, and autobiographies can shed light on the ideas of an era and bring drama to the topic or era under discussion. In the earlier grades, the teacher can read from these materials or use carefully selected excerpts. Local and oral history projects can be particularly effective in examining current controversial issues.

Covering Issues in Depth

The historical perspective and thoughtful judgment that should be the goal of social studies requires sufficient time for students to explore topics in depth.

If social studies and history are to help students acquire the understanding and skills necessary for effective participation in a democratic society and interdependent world, curriculum planners and teachers must allow time for students to explore topics in depth. Trying to teach all of world or United States history in a single year is both impossible and ineffective. The superficial skimming of names, dates, places, and other facts leads to a shallow accumulation of unconnected information that is forgotten after the test. The historical perspective and thoughtful judgment that should be the goal of social studies requires sufficient time for students to explore topics in depth on their own, analyze a variety of literature and other sources of information, and discuss issue-oriented questions with other students and the teacher.

Even in the earliest grades, students can begin to see human history and geography as a set of significant themes and understandings. These include such topics as cause and effect in history, human interaction with the environment, conflict and cooperation through the ages, and the ongoing struggle for human rights and democracy. In the earlier grades especially, children's literature that includes fiction, biography and autobiography, and poetry can illustrate these persistent themes. In the middle and upper grades, students should be encouraged to work on individual and small cooperative group projects that require in-depth study of a specific topic. Again, local history and oral history projects are particularly useful and serve to heighten student interest. They help students build skills in gathering and analyzing information, using primary sources, differentiating between opinion and fact, and seeing connections between the past and present.

Recent educational research strongly supports the concept of teaching in depth rather than simply attempting to "cover" large amounts of material. According to researchers at the University of Wisconsin, students who are taught using the in-depth approach learn more information, enhance their ability to relate knowledge to other situations, and enjoy their social studies classes more. Even more important, they do just as well (and often better) on standardized tests. Without the learning connections fostered by the in-depth method, students rapidly forget the facts accumulated in a superficial coverage of large amounts of material.

Recent educational research strongly supports the concept of teaching in depth rather than simply attempting to "cover" large amounts of material.

The best way to change from a mere coverage approach to the in-depth study of history, geography, and other social studies topics is to break the typical one-year history course into two or more separate courses. Instead of a one-year world history course covering everything from ancient civilizations to contemporary international issues, many school and state curriculum groups are structuring a two- or three-year sequence in which history is divided into different eras. For example, the first year of a two-year sequence might include all topics from prehistory through 1815. The second year would begin with a review of the previous material and move forward to the present. Some schools have adopted a three-year sequence with a series of integrated world history courses that examine respective periods ending at A.D. 500 , A.D. 1789, and the present. United States history could also be divided into two or three segments, with sufficient review provided in the second and third courses. A good date for ending the first of a two-year sequence would be 1898, after the Spanish-American War, when the United States stepped forward as a major actor on the world stage. If a three-year sequence were used, the first course might end around 1830 or 1850, the second would review the Constitutional period and conclude about 1914, and the third course would concentrate on 20th-century United States history, with special emphasis on America's role as a world leader and growing economic interdependence among nations.

Focusing on depth rather than breadth is also made easier when broad, persistent themes form the foundation of a chronological approach to history. Cultural diffusion in world history, the ongoing struggle for human rights in both world and United States history, and the changing relationship between humans and their geographic environment are examples of such themes.

Writing, Writing, and More Writing

Writing is one of the best ways to utilize the in-depth approach to social studies.

This list of trends began with a focus on content—"More History and Different History"—and concludes with an emphasis on teaching methods—the use of writing as an instructional technique to enhance learning. Other than cooperative learning, no other instructional method is as highly supported by educational research than increased writing by students. Quite simply, students who write more, learn more. This is true of all grade levels but is particularly effective in the elementary grades. Even at the primary level, researchers find that encouraging student writing has important benefits in acquisition and retention of knowledge, enhancing self-esteem, fostering creativity, and helping students make connections among reading, writing, and the subject areas.

While writing is important throughout the curriculum, no where is the impact greater than in social studies. The very nature of the subject requires the thoughtful deliberation inherent conceptualizing a topic and then explaining it in writing. Even in the lower grades, students can make comparisons, distinguish between the important and less important, understand the relationship between events and place (history and geography), and describe cause and effect. Writing provides the best vehicle for students to demonstrate these skills, which are most often associated with critical thinking.

Writing is also one of the best ways to utilize the in-depth approach to social studies. Effective writing assignments require sufficient time to both explore a topic prior to writing and discuss it with classmates and the teacher as part of the evaluation process. The movement toward "authentic assessment" essentially means the replacement of multiple-choice tests and factual-based oral knowledge questions with "portfolios" of student work, often emphasizing written essays and projects. Learning theorists explain that writing causes students to take acquired knowledge, organize it into a logical structure, and present it to another person. This process requires the student to actually *use* the facts and ideas so they are retained much longer. Moreover, students are much more likely to make connections between knowledge on different topics or even between different subject areas when writing is used frequently in the classroom.

Of course, the type of writing assignment has much to do with its effectiveness. Asking the students merely to list the causes of the American Civil War or the primary agricultural products of Canada does not lead to the positive results described above. The answers are copied from the textbook or other source. One example of an effective assignment for fifth graders studying the American Revolution is to ask the students to write three one-page "editorials." The first would be for a pro-revolution colonial paper; the second would be written for a colonial loyalist, or Tory newspaper (we know that approximately one third of the colonists were against breaking away from England); and the third would be written for a French paper supporting the French government's decision to intervene on the side of the American colonists. Such an assignment could not be copied from a single source. It would require students to see the issues from different points of view. And the discussions that would follow in class would provide a much more sophisticated understanding of the revolution and its connection to other world events at the time.

The type of writing assignment has much to do with its effectiveness.

There are several programs and sets of materials designed to help increase student writing without overburdening the teacher. Group writing projects, peer evaluation, and portfolios are a few of the techniques recommended by these writing specialists. The bottom line is: Writing works. Do more of it.

Summary

These ten trends are changing the face of contemporary social studies education—at both the elementary and secondary levels. They are having a major impact on local and statewide curriculum development and on textbook publishing. The content of elementary social studies will have changed as much from the 1980s to the year 2000 as reading instruction has changed from the era of Dick and Jane to today. It is important to emphasize that these trends, with all their impact on the social studies content and textbooks, depend on thoughtful, enthusiastic, and concerned teachers. In the hands of a dedicated, creative, and caring teacher, these trends, and the new materials designed to fit them, can result in an exciting, rich, and rewarding experience that will help students prepare for the responsibilities of participatory citizenship in a democratic society and rapidly changing world.

Bibliography

American Federation of Teachers, *Education for Democracy: A Statement of Principles. Guidelines for Strengthening the Teaching of Democratic Values*, American Federation of Teachers, Washington, DC, 1987

Bahmueller, Charles F. (General Editor), *Civitas: A Framework for Civic Education*, Center for Civic Education, Calabasas, CA, 1991.

Bradley Commission on History in Schools, *Building a History Curriculum: Guidelines for Teaching History in Schools*, National Council for History Education, Inc., Westlake, OH, 1988.

Crabtree, Charlotte et al. (Editors), *Lessons From History: Essential Understandings and Historical Perspectives Students Should Acquire*, National Center for History in the Schools, Los Angeles, CA, 1992.

Curriculum Task Force of the National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools, *Charting a Course; Social Studies for the 21st Century*, National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools, Washington, DC, 1989.

Gagnon, Paul and Bradley Commission on History in Schools (Editors), *Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, MA, 1989.

History-Social Science Curriculum Framework and Criteria Committee, *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*, California State Board of Education, Sacramento, CA, 1987.

Parker, Walter C., *Renewing the Social Studies Curriculum*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, VA, 1991.

Copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Co. All rights reserved. ST44M792 Litho in U.S.A. G-20275